

## Item 3600-001-0001 Department of Fish and Game

### *2. Interim Reporting on Select Key Activities.*

*On or before January 10, 2007, Department shall provide a report to the Legislature (including budget and fiscal committees from both houses) on the budgeted activities for 2006-07 and 2007-08 the following program areas: (1) Department's enforcement program, (2) Marine Division, (3) **land management and operations**, (4) California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Section 1600 program activities, and (5) conservation planning activities. For each of these activities, the department shall include a description of the program, an estimate of the budgeted resources dedicated to the program in 2006-07 and 2007-08, and a discussion of the key, measurable objectives of the programs for 2006-07 and 2007-08.*

### DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

#### **FY 2006-07 -- Land Management and Operations**

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Department of Fish and Game (Department) owns and manages more than one million acres of land for conservation of important species and habitats. These lands are critical to the survival of sensitive species and those of great economic importance, such as native salmonids, waterfowl, large ungulates, and offshore fisheries. These lands also provide important opportunities for the public to hunt, fish, watch wildlife and learn about nature.

The Department currently owns or administers 711 properties statewide, totaling 1,051,867 acres (588,440 owned and 463,427 administered). The 711 properties include 108 wildlife areas, 124 ecological reserves, 11 marine reserves, 230 undesignated lands, 180 public access areas, 21 fish hatcheries, and 37 miscellaneous lands. With the exception of the Department's 21 fish hatcheries managed, which are managed by the Fisheries Branch<sup>1</sup>, all Department lands are managed by the statewide Lands Program.

<sup>1</sup> Department's 21 hatcheries are not addressed in this report.

The statewide Department Lands Program (Program) is charged with the management of over one million acres of land on 690 properties located throughout California. The Program consists of 95 regional and eight headquarters staff responsible for all aspects of the program, including land acquisition, species and habitat management, property and infrastructure maintenance, and providing opportunities to the public for activities such as hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, education and research.

The Wildlife Conservation Law of 1947 established the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) within the Department for the acquisition of lands for recreational and conservation purposes. The Department works with the WCB to prioritize lands for acquisition that meet various statutory requirements for species and habitat conservation and public recreation. Once purchased by the WCB, these lands are managed by the Department.

The initial phases of management involve securing the property and assessing it to determine species and habitat management needs, infrastructure needs, and recreational opportunities in the development of a management plan. If it is necessary to regulate access and public use on Wildlife Areas and Ecological Reserves for the protection of important species and habitats on a particular property, the Department will propose regulations for adoption by the Fish and Game Commission for this purpose.

Wildlife areas are established to conserve wildlife and allow public recreational uses. Ecological reserves are established for the protection of threatened and endangered species and special habitats, for the public to observe native flora and fauna, and for scientific research. Public uses are allowed on wildlife areas and ecological reserves when they are compatible with the purposes for which the properties were acquired, and with conservation of important species and habitats on the property.

Management of Department lands varies depending on the types of habitat and species present, and the levels and types of public use that occur. Generally, Department lands can be categorized as those that are intensively managed, and those that are not. Intensively managed lands are those with permanent full-time and temporary staff onsite with operating budgets specific to that site. These lands are usually managed for controlled public use, with major development of habitat and facilities, and feature wetland habitats as a significant component of the property. Nineteen of the Department's properties are in this category. Lands not falling within this category are less intensively managed; that is without staff and major habitat development and public use programs. The Department's remaining 671 properties (excludes hatcheries) fall into this category.

While Department lands are typically purchased for more than one purpose, whether for the conservation of one or many species, habitats or to provide public use opportunity, the most common primary purposes for which the Department acquires land are for bighorn sheep habitat, threatened and endangered species, deer habitat and interior wetlands as noted in the following table:

<b>Acreage Administered By Primary Management Purpose<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Owned in Fee Title</b>	<b>Administered Through MOU's, Leases, Easements, Management Agreements</b>	<b>TOTAL<sup>3</sup></b>
Bighorn Sheep Habitat	32,006	235,220	267,227
Coastal Wetland Habitat	55,608	23,621	79,229
Deer Habitat	135,731	33,825	169,556
DFG Facilities	400	729	1,129
Fisheries Habitat	1,753	474	2,227
Grasslands/Uplands Habitat	20,282	11,628	31,960
Interior Wetland Habitat	120,465	32,412	152,877
Marine Habitat	0	39,192	39,192
Property Rights Only	1	0	1
Public Access	4,925	4,549	9,473
Right of Way Easements	0	0	0
Riparian Habitat	38,814	12,481	51,295
Special Habitats	32,456	31,900	64,356
T&E Species Habitat	145,998	37,345	183,343
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>588,440</b>	<b>463,427</b>	<b>1,051,867</b>

Management activities focus on assessing, restoring, maintaining, and improving habitats for fish, wildlife, and native plants. These activities are accomplished with species and habitat surveys and monitoring, and habitat management with irrigation, disking, burning, grazing, planting of native species, removal of invasive species, and/or installation of important structural habitat elements. Maintenance activities keep facilities in good condition for effective management; the safety and enjoyment of employees and the public; and preservation of valuable public assets. Maintenance activities include fence building and repair, gate installation, road grading, facilities repair and maintenance, garbage collection, sign replacement, habitat restoration, water management, and levee construction and repair. Facilities development consists of assessing needs for planning, and constructing facilities for employees and the public,

<sup>2</sup> This is an overview of DFG-managed or owned lands, not a detailed report. Many properties have multiple management objectives; only the primary purpose is listed here.

<sup>3</sup> Discrepancies in total acreage between tables and columns are due to rounding of numbers

such as housing, office space, workshops, visitor centers, restrooms, kiosks, signs, roads, trails, and related infrastructure.

In addition to management, maintenance and facilities development activities, the Department is responsible to other agencies for the payment of fees and assessments related to the management of properties. The Department is responsible for tracking these fees, determining their validity, and paying them when funds are available.

In addition to the lands it owns and administers, the Department also enters into management agreements on private lands for the conservation of wetlands and other important habitats. Through various private land conservation programs, such as the Comprehensive Wetland Habitat Program and the Landowner Incentive Program, the Department works with private landowners to encourage habitat enhancement and restoration for the benefit of the species that depend on these important habitats.

One of the biggest factors impacting the Program's ability to comprehensively manage departmental properties is the lack of an integrated automated system. Manual tracking systems for property inventory, facilities maintenance, uses/activities, costs and revenue are cumbersome and do not allow for efficient reporting. While Program staff maintains accurate records, the inability to systematically schedule maintenance, deferred maintenance and capital outlay projects results in the delay of necessary work, often at increased costs. Often times, critical work is not performed for this reason.

Additionally, the lack of an integrated system impacts the Department's ability to comprehensively evaluate and prioritize infrastructure issues, resulting in significant facilities management concerns, which are further enumerated in Section 5 – Five-year Infrastructure Plan.

## **BUDGETED RESOURCES**

The Department estimates budgeted resources for FY 2006-07 at \$18,559,000 (70% state funding) and 116 positions. For FY 2007-08, the Department estimates budgeted resources at \$19,815,000 (67% state funding) and 127.5 positions.

## **KEY MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES**

The Department's primary objective for the management of its lands in FYs 2006-07 and 2007-08 is to manage properties for the purposes for which they were acquired to sustain healthy habitats and wildlife populations, and to provide compatible public use opportunities.

Approximately \$15,269,000 in FY 2006-07 and \$16,525,000 in FY 2007-08 will be devoted to management of lands by Department field staff. The majority of these funds (approximately 80%) will be allocated to the 19 staffed wildlife areas and ecological reserves, with the remaining 20% allocated to unstaffed wildlife areas and ecological

reserves. Approximately \$2,163,000 will be allocated to the development and management of private land conservation programs and \$1,127,000 will be allocated to program coordination and administration.

These funds will support the following projects and activities:

- Management of over 61,000 acres of wetlands to benefit resident and migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and a suite of upland and special status species
- Management of 512,500 acres of special habitats and habitat for sensitive species
- Habitat management and maintenance activities on wildlife areas and ecological reserves
- Approximately 450 survey and monitoring efforts of important species and habitats on wildlife areas and ecological reserves to include mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, fish, native plants, vegetation, invasive species, water quality and environmental variables affecting species and habitats
- Eradication or reduction of 21 invasive species on a total of 14,000 acres on 33 wildlife areas and ecological reserves to improve habitat for important species
- Implementation of Best Management Practices on 11 wildlife areas and ecological reserves for the control of mosquitoes and prevention of West Nile Virus
- Completion of 14 Deferred Maintenance projects in FY 2006-07 with additional projects in FY 2007-08 to maintain Department facilities and protect worker and public health and safety
- Completion of management plans for 19 properties in FY 2006-07 and six properties in FY 2007-08 with four additional plans initiated in FY 2007-08
- Operation of state and federal waterfowl hunt programs to provide an estimated 95,000 visitor days annually for waterfowl and upland game hunting
- Provision of an estimated 1,000,000 visitor days for educational activities and/or wildlife viewing annually
- Development of regulations for recently acquired wildlife areas and ecological reserves, and updates of regulations for existing reserves in FY 2006-07 with adoption by the Fish and Game Commission in FY 2007-08
- Preparation of an estimated 25 proposals to the WCB for acquisition of important lands for the conservation of important species and habitats
- Management and monitoring of agreements with private landowners for the conservation of 41,000 acres of wildlife habitat

Additionally, the Program will continue exploring the development and implementation of a comprehensive automated management system as noted previously. The *Maximo* system which is currently successfully utilized by two other departments, including sister-agency State Parks, will be reviewed for potential use by the Department.